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"Give me your hand, lad, and tell me whether you have seen any thing of the Brigade? I'm afeard we're in a condemned diffikility!"

NICK WHIFFLES' PET; OR, Ned Hazel, the Boy Trapper.

BY CAPT. J. F. C. ADAMS,

The Hunter-Author, and Nephew of the Celebrated Old Grizzly Adams, the Bear-Tamer of the Rocky Mountains.

CHAPTER I.

"CONDENMED DIFFIKILITY."

"Here I am in a condemned diffikility ag'in," muttered Nick Whiffles, as he seated himself on a broad, flat rock, on the bank of the Elk river, far up in Oregon, close to the boundary line between that then wild territory and British America.

The eccentric old trapper had spent many years in roaming through the vast solitudes of the North-west, sometimes in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, and sometimes in the employ of the North-west Fur Company, but perhaps more frequently entirely alone. A man of his peculiar temperament and tastes was sure to be widely known, both at the far-scattered trading-posts and among the numerous trappers and hunters that wandered through that vast wilderness, which, at that

comparatively recent day, knew scarcely anything of the advantages of civilization.

As was the inevitable custom of Nick, when in a quandary, he relieved himself by self-communing.

"The Whiffles family was always noted for the way they had of getting into diffikility. The first thing I remember was in getting spanked on account of some condemned diffikility that I had got into with my mother, and the next thing was the measles and whooping-cough, and then when I got fairly over them and a dozen other diseases, our house took fire and burned down, and about the time the old gent got it rebuilt, it took fire and burned down ag'in. Wal, he didn't say nothin', but when the cabin went the third time, he got mad and said that thing was getting rather monotonous, and he would like, by way of variety, to see it shook down by an airth-

quake, or carried away by a hurricane; but of course none of them things happened.

"Then, when the old gentleman took his last sleep, and they come to read his will, we found the lawyer had my name down wrong;

instead of being Nick Whiffles, Esq., it was Old Nick, so I didn't get the bequest at all, but then, as everything else had been willed away already, I didn't lose much after all. My older brother got the house, but, afore he could move in it there came a big freshet that carried it down-stream, and that was the last of that.

"There was no end to my diffikilities. When I got to be a young man, I spent a whole summer's earnings in buying a suit of clothes. I had got to be a little tender on a cross-eyed girl that lived about a half-mile off, and, as soon as I could stow myself away in my new suit, I started out to see her. She gave me a hint that she wa'n't particklerly anxious,

as, when I went to go in the house, she set her dog on me, and the very first dash he made, he ripped out the whole seat of my pants and ran away with it, so that there was no chance of putting the missing cloth back ag'in.

"Wal, Nick Whiffles has seen a good deal in the way of diffikility since them days, but, somehow or other, the good Lord has brought me through all right, and, although I bear a good many scars, I'm yet sound in limb and wind, and able to eat my usual hunk of venison, foller the trail of an enemy, or run my eye along old Humbug here in a way that'll make her bite when she barks; and for all this I'm thankful."

The old trapper was silent a few moments, as if in a deep reverie. Near by his horse, known as Shagbark, was lazily cropping the grass in a way that showed he was in no famishing condition, to say the least.

At the feet of Nick Whiffles flowed the Elk river, quiet and unruffled by the slightest ripple of wind. On the other side, and as far as the eye could reach, stretched the Oregon woods. There were woods on every hand, and far off in the distance could be seen the white peaks of the Rocky Mountains, their tops covered with the snows of centuries.

It was one vast solitude, such as it had stood at "creation's morn," and looking upon the figure of the trapper as he half-sat and half-reclined upon the stone, it would have been easy to imagine him some statue cut from the rock itself.

But, as Nick remarked, at the opening of our story, he was in a "condemned diffikility" —nothing very serious, it is true, but enough to cause him some annoyance, and to occasion him considerable communing with himself.

Three days before he had crossed the line in

to British America, and was making his way toward the Saskatchewan, when he turned out of his path, somewhat, to call at Fort Wilbur to see some of his old friends, when he learned that the brigade of the Oregon Department of the Hudson Bay Company was expected in within a week; it had divided up into several companies, and two of the canoes were on their way down the Elk river, for the purpose of bartering for a very valuable lot of furs and peltries that were known to be in the possession of a party of Blackfeet, whose village was on the northern bank of this stream. The traders expected to obtain Nick Whiffles to act as a sort of "go-between" in the business, as he stood on good terms with these treacherous people, and his universally known and respected probity could not fail to make him a valuable man to both parties in the business.

Nick had acted in this capacity before, so that when the wishes of the trappers were made known to him, he felt under a sort of obligation to accept, and he turned the head of his horse, Shagbark, toward the south, and, accompanied by his sagacious dog, Calamity, made the best possible time for Elk river again.

The particular "difficultly" to which he referred was this: His cabin was about twenty miles away from where we now find him, and there he had left a young protege of his—a bright-eyed boy known as Ned Hazel, a sort of waif of the woods, that had come into the cabin, in a singular manner, a number of years before, when he was little more than a mere child. It had been left at the "cottage," with the understanding that his adopted "father" was not expected to return under three weeks, and now he was back again at the end of that number of days. He was anxious to take the little fellow on this short excursion, and had stopped at his house in the hope of finding him, but he was off on a hunt of his own, and Nick, not daring to wait, had hurried off for Elk river, where we now find him.

But where was the brigade? Above him or below him? That was the question for him to decide, and having no data by which to make his calculation, he set it down as a "condemned difficultly."

He had sent Calamity a half-mile up the river to watch and to report to him the first appearance of the brigade, while he enjoyed the uncomfortable sensation of knowing that, as likely as not, the party for whom he was waiting might be drawing further away from him each moment.

"There's a company of them Nor'-westers somewhere in this neighborhood, and if they happen to run ag'in' the brigade, there'll be the condemnedest difficultly ever heard tell on. Hello! what's up, Shagbark?"

His horse had suddenly ceased eating, and, raising his head, with the grass unchewed in his mouth, gave a whinny, clearly indicating that some one or something was approaching.

"What is it?" asked Nick, instantly becoming all vigilance himself.

The horse held his head motionless for a moment, and then resumed his cropping the grass unconsciously as before.

Nick Whiffles smiled. "That means it's Calamity coming. You critters understand each other as well as I understand you both."

The words were yet in his mouth, when the huge dog that had been the companion of Whiffles in so many exciting incidents of his life burst through the undergrowth and signified his pleasure by whining, wagging, and licking the hand of his master. The latter patted his head with no less delight.

"What is it, Calamity, for I know by your ways that there's something coming down the river? Is it the brigade or some other sort of animaline?"

How, or by what means, Nick got at the meaning of the dog, it would be impossible for us, an "outsider," to say, but it required only a few moments for him to learn that it was not the brigade, but a single canoe descending the river.

"That much being sartin," said Nick, "the difficultly is as to who handles the paddle; like enough some murderous Blackfoot; but," he added, with some hesitation, as he narrowly scrutinized the actions of his dog, "the animalie don't act in that way. He seems to have a better opinion of the chap than me."

As it was impossible to gather the full meaning of Calamity, Nick could only cast his eye up the river and wait for the mystery to solve itself.

He was not left long in waiting. Around the curve in the river, just above him, a small canoe suddenly shot to view, in which was seated a small boy, dressed as a hunter, and using the long ashen paddle with no slight skill.

The eyes of Nick Whiffles sparkled as he recognized the lad, and he rose and waved his hand as a signal.

"Bless the soul of little Ned; his own father couldn't love him any more than I do."

The water splashed and flashed in the sunlight, as the lad sent his little boat skimming over the surface of the river. A few moments only were needed for the prow of the canoe to strike the gravel at the feet of the hunter, who advanced to the water's edge to greet him.

"Give me your hand, lad, and tell me whether you have seen anything of the brigade."

"Nothing, uncle Nick."

"I was afraid you hadn't; then I'm afraid we're in a condemned difficultly."

CHAPTER II.

THE HUDSON BAY MEN.

An observer would not have failed to be struck with the contrast of appearance between Nick Whiffles and the boy with whom he was now conversing.

The hunter was bronzed, scarred and toughened by the torrid heat of summer and the Arctic coldness of the tempests that during the winter months sweep over the plains and mountains of the North-west. His face was shaggy with his untrimmed grizzled beard, and his hair, that escaped from beneath his coon-skin cap, was silvered by the same hand that spares none of us. There was immense strength in those long, muscular limbs, and although Nick generally moved with a slow, shuffling gait, he was capable of astonishing quickness and celerity of movement when necessary.

Ned Hazel, as he was called, was about fifteen years of age, rather slight for that number of years, with eyes as bright, and cheeks as delicately ruddy, as if he had been born and reared in the palace of some noble in sunny France.

His movements were all grace, and underneath the delicacy of feature and color was the grand basis of rugged health that had already triumphed over obstacles under which many a man would have succumbed. There was no doubt that the deep affection of

Nick Whiffles was fully reciprocated by Ned, whose lustrous eyes glowed with a brighter light when he looked the grizzled old hunter in the face.

The boy began frolicking with the dog, while Nick turned his eyes up-stream, with an anxious expression of countenance that showed that his mental "difficultly" was far from being purely imaginary. Suddenly he turned to Ned.

"Were ye looking for me, lad?"

"That was what brought me here."

"And what reason had you to think me here, when you seed me start for Fort Wil-

bus?"

"Why, uncle Nick," replied Ned, pausing in his gambols with Calamity, "you hadn't been gone a half-day when I happened to think it was just the time last year when you went down the river with the brigade, and I knew you expected to do the same this spring; so I was sure you had forgot it. But you was so far away that there was no use in my trying to overtake you, and I thought perhaps you would think of it and come back your self. Sure enough, when I came back, I found signs in the cabin that told me you had been there. I understood what it meant, so I made for the river, and jumping into the canoe, here I am!"

"If I only knew—Hark!" suddenly ex-

claimed Whiffles, his face lighting up, while he assumed an attitude of attention. "Did you hear nothing then, youngster?"

"Yes; it is the brigade," replied Ned, also intently listening. "Yes; it's the brigade," he quickly added; "just hear them!"

Through the quiet air, mellowed and softened by the intervening distance, came the sound of male voices singing in time with the regular sweep of their paddles. There was a profundity of tone, and an impressive melody in the blending of the score and more of voices that struck the ears of both Nick and the boy.

"I've heard that same thing many a time before," muttered the hunter, more to himself than to his companion, "and it allures me to feel all overised. Three years ago, when I was on the Saskatchewan, I was asleep one night, in my canoe, when I awoke and heard the brigade about a mile up the river, where they were encamped, singing. I listened awhile till they started off on the identical hymn that I used to hear sung when I was a boy. Wal, 'fore I knew it, the tears was running down my cheeks, and I was back in the little village church at home, with my old gray-haired mother and father, the choir singing that same hymn. Wal, wal, what's the use?"

He drew his hand across his eyes, as though some mist obscured his vision, and, with a great sigh, turned his back upon the past and looked up the river—into the future.

Two large boats, or canoes, a moment later glided to view, the melody swelling out with a full volume, as it was free from all intervening obstruction and floated over the smooth face of the river.

At the same time, he wished to do nothing in itself wrong. Doubtful whether the lad knew the precise nature of the relationship existing between him and the eccentric trapper, he determined carefully to avoid enlightening him in that respect.

Speaking in the most matter-of-fact manner, he said:

"Your name is Ned, I believe?"

"Yes; Ned Hazel."

"Not Ned Whiffles, eh?"

"Oh no; Nick is not my father; only my

uncle."

That point settled, the interlocutor felt the way more clear.

"How do you like this sort of life?"

"Very well."

The manner in which this reply was made proved that the lad, to say the least, was not perfectly satisfied.

"This out-door rugged life is certainly very healthy. I presume you do not know of such a thing as sickness by experience?"

"No, sir," was the respectful reply.

"You talk like a boy of some education. Do you know how to read?"

"Oh! yes; Nick can read a little, and he brought me some books from the fort that I have studied; but then, I don't know much," naively added Ned, with a laugh.

"You are about fifteen years of age, I should judge."

"That's it, exactly."

"A boy who has spent all his life in the woods isn't apt to acquire as much as you have done."

This was a feeler thrown out with an object, and it accomplished its purpose.

"But I haven't always lived in the woods."

"Ah! how is that?"

" Didn't Nick tell you that he found me in a canoe, drifting down the river, and he picked me up, and hunted a week for my owners, and never learned a thing about me? If he didn't tell you that's the way it was. He took me to his cabin, and I've lived with him ever since, until we love each other just as much as though we were really my father."

"Why, you have quite a romantic history," said Mackintosh, skillfully concealing his curiosity from the youth. "Do you recollect that trip down the river at such an early age?"

"Sometimes I think I can, but I ain't sure. I was very young then, and dressed in baby-clothes."

"What became of those clothes?"

"All lost, I suppose, long ago, as I've never seen them."

"They ought to have been kept, as they might have afforded some clue to your identity after years."

"Neither Nick nor I care about learning anything more about me."

"Do you have any recollection of anything that happened before Nick found you? You know that persons can sometimes remember things far back in their childhood."

The boy was silent a moment before answering.

"Sometimes I remember a little—only a little."

"Let me ask you to describe your remembrances."

"It's hard to do; they come to me in dreams sometimes. Then, when I hear men singing away off, it reminds me of something I have heard very much like it, away back, when I was very small; and then, sometimes, when I am looking out through the trees at the clouds, I can remember that I once have seen tall houses standing close together, and a great many people walking between them—"

"That shows you have once been in a city," interrupted the Scotchman.

"There be some pictures of such places in my books, and I know I've seen them somewhere."

"Can you remember any figures or faces?"

"I can remember a woman's face that used to bend over me."

"How did it look?"

"Oh! so beautiful! like an angel's."

"You can't describe it?"

"No one could—sometimes I think it must have been the Phantom Princess."

"The Phantom Princess!" repeated Mackintosh, in amazement. "What do you mean by that? Who is she?"

"Haven't you heard of her? But here comes Nick; he'll tell you all about her, for he knows her."

The Scotchman started, and hastily said, in an undertone:

"Oblige me by saying nothing to Nick about the questions I have asked you, and leave me to find out for myself all about the Phantom Princess."

Ned looked somewhat surprised at this request, but he nodded, as he rose to his feet, to signify that the request should be respected.

Nick Whiffles seemed entirely unsuspicous

of the interview, and came up in his usual cheery humor.

"Me and Calamity have made a sarnit," said he, "and we can't find any sign of a red-skin near. I'm glad your feed is ready, for I'm as hungry as my grandfather was in England, when he chewed up the Prince of Whales, and chased his father into his palace. The Whiffles family was always noted for their eatin' pernicious; my grandmother used to eatin' chickens till their heads that was chop'ed off would outbalance her, and then she threw away the bones, so that they didn't count."

"You are no great eater yourself, Nick."

"Oh! mighty! no!" sighed the trapper; "I was such a small eater that I was considered a disgrace to the family, and was turned out on that account. My grandfather fit in the Revolutionary War, and when he retired on a pension, he got five hundred a year, which he laid out one month in Bologna sausages and salt mackerel, and then bein' as he hadn't any more to live on, he pined away and died, before he could get his pension increased."

"The supper being ready, the trappers gathered in several groups, and sitting down tailor-fashion, fell to with the vim and vigor of men who were in the enjoyment of perfect health and digestion.

Nick Whiffles, Ned and Mackintosh ate in a group by themselves, while all were so occupied with their employment that scarcely a word was exchanged except in the way of request for food.

It was a singular scene. The somber forests in the background, the broad, smoothly-flowing river running back the yellow light of the immense, roaring camp-fire, the two large canoes resting against the bank, and the figures of the men engaged in eating.

"The warm light of the blazing fagots was scarcely needed, as the full moon was now sailing above in an unclouded sky, and the view up and down Elk river was quite excellent.

A full half-hour was occupied in the supper at the termination of which the pipes were produced. With scarcely an exception, the mouths of the trappers began issuing such volumes of smoke as to make it seem that the entire party were wrapped in a misty cloud.

Mackintosh produced a case of cigars, inviting Nick to join him, but the hunter declined.

"It ain't often I smoke, but when I do, I don't care about chawing terbacker at the same time."

"And I never smoked or chewed at all," added Ned, whereupon the Scotchman replaced his case, with a word of commendation for the lad.

With the taking of their pipes by the trappers, their tongues seemed to be unloosened, and a perfect babel of talk and chatter raged for a time. There was a fine flow of animal spirits upon the part of all, and many a jest and joke enlivened the intercourse around the camp-fire.

These were hardy men, toughened by the terrible winters of the North-west, by the tempestuous violence of the regions of the Saskatchewan and Mackenzie. They had tramped on snow-shoes along the coasts of Ungava and James' bay, and over rivers where a dozen feet of solid ice intervened between them and the crystal waters beneath.

This was a sort of holiday to them. The unusually severe winter had ended and the spring had fairly set in. The ice had left the streams, and the deep blue of the sky indicated the approach of mild weather. There was a crisp coldness of the air, especially in the morning and evening, which made the warmth of camp-fire and blanket very agreeable.

But the weather was just the thing for active exertion and exercise, and it would not have been changed by any member of the party, had he been given the power to do so.

During the cold months that had just ended, the agents of the great fur companies of the North-west had been busy catching the numerous fur-bearing animals of that territory. With the opening of spring, these were being gathered in, while others were making a tour among the Indians further south, to purchase all that could be procured of them.

The round, full moon, shining in an unclouded sky, was directly overhead, so that the somber forests threw only a narrow strip of shadow along the shore.

The men did not sing, as was their usual custom when sweeping along in this manner, but their pull was as steady and uniform as though they were keeping time with the motion of some "director" elevated above their heads.

The consciousness that they were in a territory with an air of hostility about it, was the cause of this. When there was no certainty but what the crack of a hostile rifle might be heard at any moment, there was no disposition on the part of the men to make their location known to any lurking foe.

All seemed impressed with the solemnity of the scene, and Nick Whiffles and Mackintosh conversed only at intervals, and then in tones so low that no one else comprehended the words uttered. Even Ned, with his arm thrown affectionately over Calamity, appeared lost in meditation. Perhaps the strange questioning of the Scotchman had again

"No, no, it must not! You must prevent it!" she cried, with passionate eagerness.

Mr. Sherman looked at her wonderingly as he lifted his hat to say adieu.

"A strange girl!" he muttered to himself.

It was something new to see one so ready to renounce a fortune—to abdicate power.

"She must love the young man!" was his judgment, as he went back slowly to his sanctum. "No woman alive, who was not in love, would have done as she has done!"

That same evening Mr. Claude Hamilton called at General Marsh's house, and sent up his card with a request that Miss Weston would favor him with an interview. She returned a message, begging to be excused from appearing, on account of indisposition.

It was no more than civility required, she thought, that he should come to thank her for her agency in restoring his rights; but she could not bear his thanks, so, in spite of Rusham's remonstrances, she refused to see him.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FAITHFUL NEGRES.

WEARILY enough sped the hours and the days to the forlorn prisoner.

The scanty streaks of light admitted by the crevices in the planks at the windows sufficed to bring out more forcibly the gloom of the noisome den in which she lay; the air was close and suffocating; the sounds that came from rooms below, of coarse oaths and drunken revelry, terrified her. Many times she started from sleep in affright, supposing that the heavy, hurried footsteps on the stairs were those of men who would presently burst into her room. She could only hide her face, and pray for deliverance; and stop her ears to keep out the hideous language in which Mrs. Hassel's lodgers and guests habitually indulged.

She rose unrefreshed; and her first effort was to move some of the fastenings of the window; not with a view of escape, but to relieve the agonizing pressure on her burning forehead.

Alas! she only exhausted herself in vain efforts. Her fragile strength could accomplish nothing. Then she bathed her head in the small quantity of water placed in a tin basin for her use; and then turned to the plate of breakfast set in the room while she was dozing. The tea was cold; but she managed to swallow part of it; but could not bring herself to touch the uninviting food. Dizzy with the pain in her head, she flung herself again on the bed, protected by her cloak and shawl from the soiled and ill-smelling bedclothing.

When her jailer came in with her dinner, about one o'clock, Elodie besought her, with piteous entreaties, to enlarge the opening at the window that there might be a free circulation of air.

"I feel as if my senses would leave me with this splitting headache," was her complaint.

"And whose fault is it, I'd like to know?" cried the beldame. "You've only to say you'll obey your uncle, and you will be taken away, and have a home as splendid as you can desire! I have no patience with such obstinate pride!"

"It is not pride!" wailed the sufferer.

"You don't think your own cousin good enough for you to marry!"

The girl sobbed out an entreaty to be spared violent words, that cut through her brain. Only a little fresh water, if she could not have air.

The woman, after a volley of abuse, flung out of the room, slamming the door so as to give the poor patient a terrible shock. She brought in a pail of fresh water, but accompanied it with renewed curses on the stubbornness of her charge.

"I thought you'd a' been out of this today!" she exclaimed, angrily. "If you're like to plague me with the care of ye much longer, you needn't look for much waitin' on, I can tell ye."

"I wish I could die!" sobbed the girl.

"I wish you would, and there would be an end of trouble!" retorted the virago. "I shall tell Rashleigh, if you're to stay longer, he must hire somebody to tend on you! What he gave don't half pay me for the room."

Elodie lifted herself up. "You shall be well paid, if you will let me go," she said, with a gleam of hope.

But the woman only laughed.

"You don't come it over me that way," she cried. "I know what you can do, and what you can't."

Finding that her reproaches were answered only by groans, she left the prisoner to her solitude.

But when, each time the meal was removed, she found it wholly untouched, when she heard low moans and mutterings of delirium—so it seemed to her—instead of articulate speech, from the unfortunate girl, she began to be uneasy.

She did not want her to die in her house. The inquiry that would follow, and the inquest, would involve her in trouble. Nor did she want her to have an illness, perhaps infectious, that would compel her to call in other help, or to send her only servant to attend her.

Rashleigh, strangely enough, had not returned, and a message sent to his lodgings had not found him. On the third day, therefore, the woman took into the captive's room a hatchet for the purpose of enlarging the aperture at the window.

Elodie was lying quiet, apparently in a doze, but was awakened by the noise of splitting the plank. This was done in a few minutes, making an opening as large as one of the panes of glass. The sash was further opened by being drawn down from the top, and the cool, fresh air came in.

The girl's untasted breakfast stood beside the bed. Mrs. Hassel gruffly bade her eat it.

"I cannot, indeed, I cannot!" was the feeble answer. "But I shall feel better, now I can have the air. If you would only give me more cold water!"

With grumbling the woman complied.

She noticed that the girl's cheeks were scarlet, and her eyes bright with fever.

"A pretty business I am like to have," she muttered, as she descended. "She will have a relapse, to a certainty. And a doctor will have to be called in! I will go myself for Rashleigh, and tell him to take her away."

Rashleigh had been arrested and remanded for examination, on the charge of kidnapping a young lady with felonious intent. At that stage of the inquiry no bail was admitted, notwithstanding his declaration that the girl had escaped from him, and he knew not where she was.

Elodie rose, dreadfully weakened as she was, to bathe her head and neck in the cold water. She could not eat. But she managed, with difficulty, to drag herself to the window, where she could look out at the opening.

It was a sorry view, the dirty, small rear yard, choked with heaps of rubbish, with the grimy walls of yards belonging to houses in the next street. A strong, sickening odor

came up from the garbage below. But the sunlight, and the rifts of blue sky seen at a distance, were refreshing.

A woman came out with a basket of wet clothes, and began to hang them on a line. Elodie saw by her hands and bare arms that she was a colored woman.

Two or three times the woman went back and returned with more wet garments, before Elodie caught a glimpse of her face. When she did, she started up wildly, and beat at the window, with a cry of:

"Nelly! Oh, Nelly! Nelly!"

The woman stopped and looked around her, not knowing whence the cry came. Then it occurred to Elodie that to call her in the hearing of her jailer would be to defeat her chance of communicating with her.

She snatched up a cambric handkerchief and waved it from the opening in the window. Then she rolled it into a ball, and flung it to her.

The two officers, who held the warrant for court, from which she was consigned to a lodgment in the Tombs.

The officer answered by quietly slipping a pair of handcuffs over her wrists.

Meanwhile Wyndham had lifted in his arms the insensible form on the couch.

Elodie opened her glazed eyes, and looked in his face; but she knew him not. She spoke, but her utterance was only the low moaning of delirium.

Wyndham bade one of the officers help him carry her, wrapped in her cloak and shawl, down-stairs and out to the carriage. He Mrs. Hassel's arrest, led her to the police, placed her tenderly within it, supporting her in his arms, and ordered the driver to go to his mother's house.

The two officers, who held the warrant for court, from which she was consigned to a lodgment in the Tombs.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LOVE'S MAZES CLEARED.

For many days and nights lay Elodie unconscious of all around her, while the brain that had seized upon her ran its fearful course.

Olive Weston obeyed the summons to her bedside, and took up her abode in Mrs. Blount's house. It was her only comfort to be useful to others.

Ruhama came every day to inquire after the invalid. And more than once Emily St. Clare came to watch at night over the poor girl she learned to love, pitying her so profoundly.

One evening Ruhama came later than usual, and it was nearly dusk when Olive went into the parlor to meet her.

"I have the doctor's permission," whispered Mrs. Marsh, "to take a look at poor Elodie. I will run up to her room for a few minutes."

She drew from her pocket a small memorandum-book, with a pencil, and wrote clearly on one of the leaves the address of Wyndham Blount's house and office. On another she scrawled a brief note, imploring him to come and save her, before her reason should be overturned in the dreary discomfits of her captivity. He must not lose a moment; or Rashleigh would hide her away where they could never find her.

Her head ached so fearfully, she could not sit up a moment longer. With a thanksgiving and a prayer, she again threw herself on the couch, holding her forehead, on which she had laid a handkerchief dipped in cold water, and listening for the step of her friend and deliverer.

It was more than an hour and a half before she heard again the stealthy step. This time her name was pronounced in a loud tone.

She started up and staggered to the door. The paroxysm of fever had returned, and she controlled her movements with difficulty.

"Oh, Nelly!" she wailed, in answer to the call; "take me out! I shall die here!"

"I cannot open the door, honey. I have looked for the key; the missus must have taken it when she went to market. No other key opens this door but the one!"

"Mr. Hamilton, you must not carry too far your chivalric notions. Mrs. Stanley meant you, and you alone, to be her heir."

"Not me alone; you know she did not."

"Why will you pain me by allusions?"

Again he caught her hand.

"Would to Heaven," he exclaimed, impetuously, "you would let me shield you from all pain, Olive. I can only accept this fortune if you will share it with me!"

"Mr. Hamilton! I had never the slightest claim on Mrs. Stanley's bounty! You know I had not. It was a mistake that caused her last wish."

Claude interrupted her, clasping her hand warmly, and speaking in tones that went to her very soul.

"She made no mistake, Olive, in thinking that I loved you with all my heart! I do love you! I have always loved you—you only, and my life will be wretched if you refuse to bless it with your love!"

By an effort she released her hand, and hid the starting tears.

"Mr. Hamilton, how can this be?"

"I have been a fool, dearest! I own it! I fled from the sight of you so many months since because I thought you despised me! When I returned, I interpreted your coldness to mean utter aversion. It was only within a day or two that I learned by how gross a blunder I had been deprived of the chance of receiving your answer to my letter. Olive, my heart! I have suffered for it! Can you not forgive me?"

She lifted her face.

"Is it possible? Are you not engaged to Miss Monelle?"

"I have never been engaged to any one. I have never loved any one but you, Olive! I have feared that you disliked me! I have been most unhappy! Tell me you have not avoided me as you have done, because you disliked me!"

"I never disliked you!"

"Can you love me, Olive? May I hope to gain your love, if I have never had it? Will you pardon all my folly and stupidity?"

The girl could not speak; but she put her hand in her lover's. It was answer enough.

This time Claude not only imprisoned her hand, but clasped her to his breast, and pressed the kiss of betrothal on her lips.

For an hour they sat together, and the twilight deepened into night. Olive started as the door was opened, letting in a flood of light from the hall.

Ruhama entered, came up to them, and seeing how it was, kissed Olive, with tears in her eyes. "May you be happy!" she murmured.

She went out with Claude; and Olive sought her own room, to vent her emotion in happy tears. In an hour she went to resume her watch by Elodie's bedside.

The suffering girl had the attendance of the best physicians in the city; but their skill availed little in the struggle with disease.

Life and death battled for her; and that life won the victory, was owing, under God's blessing, to her vigorous youthful constitution.

Wyndham took his share in the night-watches, and he was with her when the crisis came. The morning sun sent its first golden shimmers to play on the wall, and the fresh morning breeze came in caressingly, when Elodie opened her eyes, to which intelligence had returned, and fixed them on the face bending over her. Olive had come in and stood beside Wyndham.

"Dear guardian!" the patient softly murmured.

"You must not talk!" he answered, pressing her hand. "We are so thankful that you will be spared to us."

Elodie closed her eyes in a peaceful sleep, and he stole softly from the room.

When strength returned, the invalid begged to know how she came there; she remembered only the horrible prison in which she had been confined.

The beldame broke into the violent execrations and abuse such women use when driven to bay. She threatened to tear out the eyes of her captors.

What need to prolong the details of our story? The usurper, Richard Lumley, was speedily dispossessed, and Claude Hamilton put

the house to rights at a quiet and simple wedding in church.

Nelly was cared for by the friends of the girl she had aided to rescue. And she had saved more, for inside a silken sacque given the woman by the late Mrs. Rashleigh, she had found, stitched carefully, the long missing certificate of the marriage of Elodie's parents. Her aunt had taken this means of saving it from her brutal husband, and had forgotten its supposing it in the box she gave Wyndham. Thus her title to the property was undisputed.

Rashleigh and his sister-in-law were tried and punished, their crime being proved. The man served out a term in State Prison.

Elodie completed her education under the best private tutors; but never cherished her former dreams of musical celebrity. Her voice had lost something of its power, but she retained sufficient to charm the domestic circle, and the friends who gathered round them. As the wife of Wyndham Blount, she never again wished to figure as a candidate for public applause.

THE END.

THE END.

Saturday Journal

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Sunshine Papers.

Burke Corrected.

EDMUND BURKE, writing of the French revolution and the unfortunate Marie Antoinette, says: "Little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honor and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone."

"But the age of chivalry is gone!" Did Burke's words express a reality, a reality that extends even to this day? or did he, seeing blindly through the clouds of war, mistake for perished what was merely for a time submerged under the waves of social anarchy? Surely if Burke could come back from his long quiet, and make a few observations in modern society, he would not have the ungraciousness to declare that we have no chivalry among us! How could he so malign our gallant and courteous American youths! In what age of chivalry ever bloomed such flowers as adorn our highways and public places?

Oh, spirit of Burke! we invoke thy presence for a brief period among our brothers, and friends, and masculinity in general, of this seventh decade of the nineteenth century! Be thou our companion for a little time, in the ordinary walks of life, and learn that thy declaration was premature, in beholding the chivalrous souls that inspire the words and actions of our lords of creation!

We, of the sex of that fair queen whose sad fate you so gallantly deprecate, ask you to accompany us this day. We propose to make some visits. Ah! how unfortunate that as we pass to the door our slender umbrella slips to the sidewalk; its silken cover is too dainty for such contact, but the mishap is valuable, as it points a trait of American chivalry; see how careful this gentleman is to let it be undisturbed, and how gallantly he admires us soil our light gloves in picking it up.

Will that stage-driver never look this way and heed our signal? It seems not, and we must await the next, for the chivalry of these several gentlemen who have observed our trouble, teaches them, intuitively, that it would rend our hearts to have them raise a sound in our behalf. But here is the next stage, and the driver sees us. How steep and slippery and muddy are the steps, how unwieldy the heavy door, how chivalrous the man at this corner reading his paper, how considerately he spares us the surprise of having to thank him for any assistance rendered! That gentleman opposite will get our bill changed, carefully count what money is to be returned to us, and settle our fare! Why, my poor spirit, that would be absurd! How much more gallant to allow us these little entertainments! He can display his knightly character in so much courteous ways; he can put the window down back of us, or up, without consulting us; he can stare at us proudly, leer at us over his paper, or step on our sensitive toes. We aight, but no chivalrous man would annoy us by alighting to help us down the dangerous steps.

We are ushered in our friend's parlor. A gentleman is just issuing thence. He does not embarrass us by holding wide the door with courtly bow, or pushing a comfortable chair to our acceptance. He chivalrously does not notice us and goes his way. Presently some gentlemen callers lounge in. They pleasantly forget to leave sporting news and a flavor of slang in their conversation outside the doors; they chivalrously criticize an absent lady;

speaking of her in admirably familiar terms. When we arise to go, they do not relax their peculiarly easy positions, but wish us a carelessly polite good-day.

We turn our steps toward the business part of town. Notice, oh, spirit how freely our chivalrous men bestow on us bold glances, criticize us aloud as we pass, fling compliments to our ears as we go near them on the promenade. Notice also how they smoke in our presence, ornament the walk for our feet, appropriate seats set aside for us, come in rude contact with us, and hasten on without apology; how seldom they seek to lighten our burdens; how a helping hand, or perform little galantries for us. And think you no chivalry eddies through their veins? Ah, how you are wrong them! They can clear themselves, if they will. Listen to what they will tell you: That women, in these days, are so self-sufficient, and usurping, and independent, that true chivalry can only express itself as you have!

Now, spirit, return whence thou camest, and be satisfied that the "age of chivalry" abides with us!

PARSON'S DAUGHTER.

GENTLE WORDS.

How little gentle words cost, yet what a potent power have they over us mortals! What encouragement do they not bear—how they lighten toil, remove obstacles and cheer us on over the rugged pathway of life! They so make us and others brighter, happier and more cheerful, that it is impossible to compute the amount of benefit they confer on one and all.

After a woman has been at work all the day long, and feels weary enough to lay down her burden of life, vexed with the crosses she has met with, disengaged with the many failures she has accomplished, and troubled in spirit because she has not done as much as she should, and knowing that the same dull routine of duties must be gone through with on the morrow, don't you think a gentle word would help her to bear more patiently the troubles and cares that fall to her lot? Wouldn't she feel thankful to you for a few words of sympathy and encouragement?

When the merchant comes home from a long day's work of vexation and care, and his mind and brain are in quite a tumult, and he feels cross and snappish with himself and those around him, if there were friendly face to meet him on the threshold and kindly hands were there to remove his overcoat, while gentle words welcomed him home as though he were really welcome, his brain would be calmer and his mind more tranquil. If those for whom he was slaving his life were to treat him with loving kindness and feelings of true and sincere affection he would look on his cares as pleasures; the gentle words would make him forget that sales were slow, that there were such things as money panics, his home would seem like a little Eden. These gentle words yield more interest than railway shares; they are like trees that bear abundant fruit.

When you want to reclaim the drunkard do so with gentle words; let him see that he has a friend, as well as an adviser in you, and you'll make more converts to temperance than you will by scolding the inebriate. A few gentle words sway many a man from a downward course and reclaim others who have fallen.

Many a reformed drunkard will tell you that gentle words saved him where harsh treatment had no effect. Kindness is very seldom thrown away and there isn't too much of it in this world. Intemperance must be an affliction for any one to put up with, but there are cases where bitter words have caused a man to drink deeper and deeper, while loving, gentle ones, caused another to break the bottle and never touch the drink again.

Have gentle words for the aged; they'll not be with you long; they'll not trouble you a great while; they are fast nearing the grave, and you should smooth the passage to their long home with gentle words. Remember, they have many pains, infirmities and afflictions of which we know nothing. Their age makes them dependent on us for many things, and we should undertake that care as a solemn duty.

If the old are fractious and peevish, and we feel inclined to answer them harshly, let us keep the unkind words to ourselves. If we are peevish and turbulent in our answers it will but make them more so; yet, if they notice that our responses are gentle, they will not be so exacting in their demands. When we are cross and harsh with the helpless aged, we forget there was a time when we were even more helpless than they, and our treatment was not such as we bestow upon them. Put the matter in that light and you will see plainly how the case stands.

Compliment spurs us on to do better and strive the harder to reach the goal we are hoping to win; the gentle words are, to us, what the cheers of the performer are to him, for we feel that others are anxious for our success. Censure discourages us; it makes us afraid for fear failure will be the result, and because we fear a failure we fear to try.

If courage were marked on every guide-board in our journey through life, we should go on bravely and persistently until the end was reached, and we should find that gentle words put us on our way to heaven. Let us then find those who are in need of encouragement, and do all in our power to show them, our gentle words and loving deeds, the way not so dreary, and kindness is not entirely dead.

EVE LAWLESS.

Foolscap Papers.

Niagara Falls.

THE NIAGARA FALLS beats all the falls which we have had since the beginning of the Christian era.

I am glad that I have lived to behold them, and will be gladder if I can live a good many years after I behold them.

The water falls over just as easy as can be from a height of one hundred and sixty-eight feet to a depth of one hundred and sixty-eight feet, making in all three hundred and thirty-six feet.

I hired a guide, who took hold of my hand and led me around for fear I might fall over the precipices, and forgot to fall back, as they usually do.

In falling such a distance the water gets so dreadfully hot that it boils at the bottom, and steam enough rises up to furnish all the engines in the world if it was gathered up.

The mist is very dense, and if much of it was missed we could see more of the Falls.

I gazed upon the terrible scene—I believe that is what they have got in the habit of calling it.

I asked the guide how long these Falls had been in operation. He said they had been in running order long before the making of the world, and charged me a shilling for answering the question.

They never cover them up when it rains. How my grand soul yearned to travel around through the country with those Falls exhibiting them in all the principal cities!

They say the Falls are gradually wearing away, and it seemed to me it would be a good thing to turn the water to one side and preserve the Falls dried.

The guide told me that the proprietors had an ample supply of water to run them many years yet.

The Falls never freeze up in the winter entirely; if they did what a glorious thing it would be to slide down on a sled!

Occasionally some one goes down over the Falls, but he generally goes on down through to China.

A little steamer plies below the Falls, but it never runs up the Falls more than a hundred feet.

Newly married people generally, on their wedding tour, take the Falls in—afterward they have their falls out.

It wasn't so wet around there it would be much better.

I wanted the guide to catch a little rainbow for me, but he said he hadn't time to do it.

I half believed the Falls will play out before long from the fact that everybody about there charges so much for anything that they are trying to make the most out of it before it plays out. You can only see the Falls through a hole in a fifty dollar bill, nowadays; it bursts a fifty dollar bill mighty soon.

I got a boy to black my boots and he charged me fifty cents, though I furnished him with the spit. When I remonstrated with the boy he said that he had his mother's son, his sister's brother, and his uncle's nephew to support and time was hard.

When the hackman upset me he wanted to charge me two dollars extra, because he said, he couldn't afford to upset that way for nothing; he argued so well I could not resist, but paid him. But one thing I will say in favor of these blackmen; they didn't take all my money, though I had considerable; they left me enough to get back home with, and I am very thankful.

The roar of the falling waters is so deafening that you can't hear your wife talk, and I think it would be kind o' soothoing to the nerves to reside in the immediate neighborhood—the sound is so lulling.

The Falls do not belong entirely to the United States, and there is where I blush for my country. The best part of the Falls is on the Canada side, which is a shame, and reflects no credit on our patriotic statesmen. What are they doing all this time?

A Canada chap told me they had falls over in his country nearly a mile high.

"Falls of water?" I asked.

"Even so," said he.

But he afterward told me they were rainfalls; then we smiled.

An English nobleman who was visiting Niagara introduced himself to me and showed me the most polite honor and attention; whenever I went he went. I was very proud of his attentions, and never allowed him to pay a cent for expenses. He gave me the most pressing invitations to visit him at his castle when I went to England, and borrowed a hundred dollars of me. He promised to see me in the evening, but forgot it. Now, I had all confidence in the man. Who knows but he might have been robbed and thrown over the rocks? Perhaps he forgot my address.

I allowed my poetic and entranced soul to be drawn from the contemplation of the glories and splendors of the enchanting scene before me, unequalled upon this terrestrial sphere, by a fellow who was flipping three cards on a bench beside me. He asked me blandly what I'd bet on picking up the tray. That was plain enough. A fellow as simple as he ought to lose five dollars, so I laid down my V, picked up the deuce, and went down to see the Cave of the Winds.

Niagara is a stupendous thing—especially the stow; yet with all the discommodities, one is led to think it is aggravation.

I came away impressed with the magnitude of the Falls and the smallness of my pocket-book, with a roaring in my ears which wakes my wife up in the night.

WASHINGTON WHITEHORN.

Gents' Fall Styles.

TRAVELING and business suits for fall and winter display the prevalent taste for extreme English styles. Large plaids are chosen for the whole suit of coat, waistcoat, and trousers. The prevailing colors are iron-gray and dark-brown, though other dark grounds are worn. The materials are English and Scotch goods, also the rough-threaded Knickerbocker cloths, and the soft, flexible camel's hair, closely resembling in fabric and design those in use for ladies. The business coat is a double-breasted reefing sack, cut longer than sacks have been for many years; its edges are double-stitched—not bound. The trowsers are very large.

As these business suits are for general everyday wear, tailors seek to vary the manner of making them. Sometimes they are in the full English style with a single-breasted Newmarket coat fastened by from one to three buttons, with flaps at the waist and pockets. With such a coat the waistcoat is dark to wear with a scarf. Plaids and other dark mixtures known as suitings are used for the coat, waistcoat, and pantaloons. Undress suits of heavy blue chev'et or cloth of excellent quality are in favor with young men.

Some fashionable tailors insist upon making everything *en suite*, and positively decline to make a coat unless they are also permitted to make a waistcoat of the same material with it. Cloths with fine minute diagonal lines, twilled like nuns' serge, are preferred to the broad, coarse-looking diagonal cloths worn a year ago. Dark-blue suits, of invisible shades that are little more definite than blue-black, are even more desirable than they were during the summer.

Wide bindings of galloon are fashionable for edging coats, but men of plain tastes consider these trimmings too pronounced and showy, and prefer instead a narrow roll or a small corded edge of braid. Men who dress in the height of fashion wear wide pantaloons, cut straight, with no spring over the ankles.

All new overcoats are very long in the skirt, and in this alone is there any rule, for their shapes are diversified. Surtouts and sacks are both worn. The more dressy surtouts are long, double-breasted frocks, with silk linings and velvet collars. Sacks are long and shaped to the figure, and may be either single or double-breasted. The greater number are double-breasted, but there is still a preference for single-breasted sacks with fly-fronts. The fashionable color for overcoats is dark-gray in the pepper-and-salt mixtures known as "Oxford's." Dark-blue, brown, and black colored overcoats are likewise worn. The materials are ribbed diagonal and basket-woven cloths. Heavier cloths, that are called fur-beavers and elysians, will be used for winter overcoats.

Reefing sacks of the heavy material used for overcoats are made up very warmly, and worn before putting on winter overcoats by gentlemen who do not wear the light overcoats described for autumn.

Topics of the Time.

—WE now know where the cheese comes from—some of it. Crawford county, Pa., has in operation fifty-eight factories, producing 6,310,000 pounds of cheese; Erie county twenty-two factories, producing 2,610,000 pounds; Mercer and Venango counties eleven factories, producing 647,700 pounds.

The aggregate in the four northern and one southern factories, producing 9,557,700 pounds of cheese.

We can show equally big factories in New York that don't lie there must be tremendous cheese-eaters.

Of course, we send the article all over the world, but even that don't stop the supply.

Hay, corn, cotton, wheat, hogs and cheese—these are their order of value, commercially, to this country.

—A boy recently found a pocket-book and returned it to its owner, who gave him a five-cent piece.

The boy looked at the coin in his hand and then handed it reluctantly back, and said,

"I can't change it." But this meanest man we have heard of is the father of a family of seven boys and girls, in a near by State, who subscribes for this paper, and after having read it carefully, then lets it out to the boys and girls in succession, charging one cent each.

It bursts a fifty dollar bill mighty soon.

I got a boy to black my boots and he charged me fifty cents, though I furnished him with the spit.

When I remonstrated with the boy he said,

"I have to eat, and I have to pay for my board."

I am sure the boy is right, but he is not the only boy in the world.

—WE now know where the cheese comes from—some of it. Crawford county, Pa., has in operation fifty-eight factories, producing 6,310,000 pounds of cheese; Erie county twenty-two factories, producing 2,610,000 pounds; Mercer and Venango counties eleven factories, producing 647,700 pounds.

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—WE now know where the cheese comes from—some of it. Crawford

"I—I—I'm Orlando C. Toosy pegs, I—I'm very much obliged to you," stammered Mr. Toosy pegs, dodging behind Pet, in evident alarm.

"Young man, come over here!" solemnly said the beldame, keeping her long finger pointed, as if about to take aim, and never removing her chain-lightning eyes from the pallid physiognomy of the unhappy Mr. Toosy pegs.

"Go, Horlander," said Pet, giving him an encouraging push. "Bear it like a man; which means, hold up your head, and take your finger out of your mouth, like a good boy. I'll stick to you to the last."

With chattering teeth, trembling limbs, bristling hair, and terror-stricken face, Mr. Toosy pegs found himself standing before the ancient sibyl, by dint of a series of pushes from the encouraging hand of Pet.

"Young man, wouldst thou know the future?" began the old woman, in a deep, stern, impressive voice.

"I—I—I'm very much obliged to you, Mrs. Two-Shoes," replied poor Mr. Toosy pegs. "It's real kind of you, I'm sure—and—"

"Vain mortal, spare thy superfluous thanks," interrupted the mysterious one, with a wave of her hand. "Dark and terrific is the doom Fate has in store for thee—a doom so dreadful that dogs will cease to bark, the stars in the firmament hold their breath, and even the poultry in the barnyard turn pale to hear. Woe to thee, unhappy man! Better for thee somebody else had a millstone tied round his neck, and were plunged into the middle of a frog-pond, than that thou shouldst live to see that day."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the horrifed Mr. Toosy pegs, wiping the cold drops of perspiration off his face, as the sibyl flourished her snuff-box in the air, as if invoking kindred spirits to come to her aid.

"Stupide proration!" exclaimed Ray, laughing inwardly.

"Live to see what day?" inquired Pet, whose curiosity was aroused. "The day he gets married, maybe."

"Awful will be the results that will follow that day," went on the seeress, scowling darkly at the irreverent Pet. "Tremendous clouds will flash vividly through the sky, the blinding thunder will show itself in all the colors of a dying dolphin, and a severe rain-storm will probably be the result. On thyself, oh, unhappiest of mortals, terrific will be the effects it will produce. These beautiful snuff-colored freckles will shake to their very center; these magnificent whiskers, which, I perceive, in two or three places show symptoms of sprouting, will wither away in dread, like the grass which perisheth. This courageous form, brave as a lion, which has never yet quailed before man or ghost, will be rent in twain like a mountain in a gale of wind; and an attack of influenza in your great toe will mercifully put an end to all your earthly agonies and troublous at once! Unhappy mortal, go! Thou hast heard thy doom."

A more wretched and woebegone face than Mr. Toosy pegs displayed, as he turned round, no earthly eye ever fell on before. Ray had turned to the window in convulsions of laughter.

"I ain't well," said Mr. Toosy pegs, mournfully, as he took up his hat. "I've got a pain somewhere, and I guess I'll go home. Good-morning, Mrs. Two-Shoes. I'm very much obliged to you, I'm sure."

And slowly and dejectedly Mr. Toosy pegs crushed his hat over his eyes, and turned his steps in the direction of Dismal Hollow.

"Poor Horlander!" said Pet; "if he isn't scared out of his wits, if he ever had any. Say, Goody, won't you tell my fortune, too?"

"Come hither, scoffer!" said the sibyl, with solemn sternness. "Appear, and learn the dark doom Destiny has in store for thee. Fate, that rules the fortunes of men as well as little yaller gals, will make you laugh on 'tother side of your mouth, one of these days."

"Oh, Hamlet! what a falling off was there!" quoted Ray, laughing. "What a short jump that was from the sublime! Don't pile on the agony too high, Mother Awful."

"Peace, irreverent mortal!" said Goody Two-Shoes, giving her snuff-box a solemn wave; "peace, while I foretell the future fate of this tawny little mortal before me!"

"Well, if you ain't the politest old lady!" ejaculated Pet. "But go on; I don't mind being called ugly, now. I'm getting used to it, and rather like it."

"You'll never be drowned," began the sibyl, looking down prophetically in Pet's little dark palm.

"Well, that's pleasant, anyway," said Pet.

"Because you were born to be hanged," went on the old woman, unheeding the interruption.

"Whew!" whistled Pet.

"Your days are numbered—"

"Well, I never saw a number on one of 'em yet," interrupted the incorrigible Pet.

"Peace, scoffer!" exclaimed the beldame, fiercely. "The fates disclose a speedy change in thy destiny."

"I expect they do," said Pet; "for I'm going to be sent to school soon."

"Some dark torture is in store for you, an agony that nothing can alleviate, a nameless secret misery—"

"Perhaps it's the choleric," suggested Pet. "If it is, I ain't afraid; 'cause gin and water will cure it."

"Silence, girl! and mock not destiny thus. At some future day, you will be a wife."

"Well, there ain't anything very wonderful in that, I'm sure; I didn't need to be told that. You didn't expect I'd be an old maid—did you?"

"I hold here," continued the seeress, peering into the little palm quite heedless of the interruption, "a miserable little bit, where thirteen red-haired children are playing, and a tawny woman, with a dirty face, in the midst of them, is—"

"Spanking them all round!" interrupted Pet, eagerly. "If she isn't, it ain't me."

"Will you be silent?" vociferated the ancient prophetess, with increasing sharpness. "Terrible is the doom of those who scoff at fortune as thou dost! Don't withdraw your hand. It is here plainly revealed that if you travel much you'll see a good deal."

"Go 'way!" ejaculated Pet, incredulously.

"And if you have a great deal of money you'll be rich."

"It ain't possible!" once more broke in the unbelieving Miss Lawless.

"And if you don't die, you'll live to be pretty old."

"Now, who'd a' thought it?" said Pet.

"Leave me, wretched unbeliever!" said the old woman, flinging away Pet's hand, with an angry disdain. "Leave me; but beware! I am not to be mocked with impunity."

"Neither am I," said Pet; "so I'm not going to believe a word about them thirteen red-headed children. A baker's dozen, too; as if twelve wasn't enough! Poh! I ain't such a goose, Goody Two-Shoes."

"Well, wait, you misdirected, sunburned, unfortunate, turned-up-nosed unbeliever!" exclaimed the old virago, shaking her fist at Pet, in a rage. "Waif! And when my words come true, remember they were foretold by Goody Two-Shoes."

"Well, I declare!" said Pet. "If I wasn't the patientest, best-tempered little girl in Maryland, I wouldn't put up with all this abuse. Not even my nose is allowed to escape; and it never injured you or anybody else in its life."

And Pet, with a deeply-wounded look, ran her finger along the insidious proboscis, as if to soothe its injured feelings.

"Well! Will you tell my fortune, Mother Two-Shoes?" said Ray, turning round. "I am particularly anxious to know the future."

"Well, you needn't be, then," said Goody, snappishly; "for it has nothing good in store for a miserable scapegoat like you. I won't tell it; but I will tell it to that little gal's," pointing to Erminie, who all the time had been quietly looking on not knowing whether to laugh or be afraid, and wholly puzzled by all. "She gave me some breakfast; and 'one good turn deserves another,' as the Bible says. Give me your hand."

Afraid of offending the old lady, Erminie held it out.

"You'll be a rather nice-looking young woman, if you don't grow up ugly," began the seeress, looking intently at the little white palm that lay in her like a lily-leaf; "and will have some sense, if not more, unless you get beside yourself, as most young gals nowadays mostly do. It's likely you'll be married to somebody some time; very likely the first letter of his name will be Ranty Lawless, who, by the way, will be one of the nicest young men you or anybody else will ever see. If he makes you his wife—which is a blessing you ought to pray for every day—don't forget to learn to make slap-jacks and Johnny-cake, two things that good youth is very fond of, as I am given to understand. As he will probably be away up there among the big-wigs in Congress every day, don't forget to give him your blessing and a paper of sandwiches every morning before he starts; and meet him at night, when he returns, with a smile on your lip and a cup of tea in his hand. By following these directions, an unclouded future will be yours, and you will probably be translated, at last, in a cloud of fire and brimstone, and your virtues inscribed on a pewter-plate, as an example for all future generations."

"What an enviable fate, Erminie!" exclaimed Ray.

"Seems to me, old lady, our Ranty's a great bother to you," said Pet, suspiciously, as she fixed her bright, searching eyes keenly on her face.

"I always take an interest in nice youths," said the old woman, rising and grasping her stick, preparatory to starting. "I guess I won't mind staying for dinner. I'll call some other day, thankies."

"Not so fast, Goody Two-Shoes," exclaimed Ray, coolly catching the old woman by the collar. "I've discovered you, at last. 'Off, ye londing!'

"Not so fast, Goody Two-Shoes," exclaimed Ray, coolly catching the old woman by the collar. "I've discovered you, at last. 'Off, ye londing!'

"And to the horror of Erminie, he grasped the cloak and tore it off, in spite of the vigorous struggles of the beldame. Then followed the hat, and red handkerchief, and the venerable gray locks; and Erminie stifled a scream as she fancied head and all was coming. The bushy gray eyebrows came off, too, and the bright, handsome, mischievous face of Master Ranty Lawless stood revealed.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 290.)

The Prairie Rover:

THE ROBIN HOOD OF THE BORDER.

BY BUFFALO BILL,
AUTHOR OF "DEADLY-EYE, THE UNKNOWN SCOUT," ETC.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MYSTERIOUS HORSEMAN.

THE sun was yet some distance from the western horizon, when the scout arrived at the motte, situated upon the banks of a small stream, and where years before a small outpost had been established, but which, alas! had met with a sad fate, as its occupants had all fallen beneath the tomahawk and scalping-knife of the red-men.

Cautiously advancing into the timber, with his eyes searchingly invading every covert, and his nerves strung for action, should there be an enemy ambushed within, he soon felt assured that Captain Raymond and his band had not yet arrived.

He was preparing to stake Comrade out to feed upon the luxuriant grass, and had removed his saddle to better rest him, when there was a sound of something coming slowly through the underwood, but whether a buffalo, deer, or an enemy, he knew not.

Turning rapidly, he was about to replace his saddle, when a horse and rider dashed suddenly upon the scene, and at the same moment the eyes of the scout and the stranger met, the former with a gaze of wondering surprise, the latter with a look of fear.

The scout had seized his rifle and stood ready for action, but quickly the weapon was lowered, before him, mounted upon a clean-limbed and thoroughly-looking bay mare, was a young girl, scarcely eighteen years of age.

Her hair was black as the raven's plumage, long, silken, and hung in massive braids down her back and rested upon her horse.

Her eyes were exceedingly large, lustrous, and with long, drooping lashes, while every feature was perfect, and the ruby lips, slightly parted, showed the teeth as white as pearls.

The complexion was that of a brilliant brunette, browned still deeper by the sun and wind, and in her cheeks glowed the hue of perfect health.

She was attired in a closely-fitting riding-habit of fashionable manufacture, of navy-blue, trimmed with silver buttons, worn on her hand gauntlet gloves, and a light, slouch hat, encircled by a silver cord, and shaded by a rich, black ostrich feather, was upon her head, while her steed was equipped with a horse-hair bridle, immense silver bit, and side-saddle covered with buck-skin, ornamented with beads and quill-work.

Instinctively the scout raised his sombrero, and at his movement the lips of the beautiful maiden parted in a low order, her hand drew a silver-mounted pistol from a saddle-pocket, and away dashed the handsome mare, almost riding the scout down as she swept by.

"In Heaven's name, who is that girl, and where have I seen that face before?"

"What can she be doing here, alone upon the prairie, and in an Indian country?"

"Doubtless she belongs to some wagon-train, and is lost; but I remember of no emigrant train being expected here now."

"Who can she be? that's the question."

"At any rate I'll never discover by remaining here, and yonder she goes like mad across the prairie, doubtless believing me an enemy."

"Come, Comrade, we must give chase."

Bounding into his saddle, the next moment the scout was flying in full pursuit across the prairie, about three hundred yards behind the rider.

"Come, Comrade, yonder light-heeled nag shows you the road, a thing no other animal on the frontier can do; by Heaven, she is leaving us, old fellow! Come!" and the scout urged on his mustang, as glancing behind her, the maiden was seen to suddenly cause her mare to quicken her speed.

"Well, well, well! Comrade, you are doing your best, and the bay still creeps away from you," and with a look of disappointment at the sinking sun, and remembering his appointment, Prairie Rover applied the spurs to his horse, who, smarting with pain and rage at the unexpected treatment, bounded madly forward in pursuit.

"Well, well, well! Comrade, you are doing your best, and the bay still creeps away from you," and with a look of disappointment at the sinking sun, and remembering his appointment, Prairie Rover applied the spurs to his horse, who, smarting with pain and rage at the unexpected treatment, bounded madly forward in pursuit.

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By Heaven! that horse fairly flies! See! see! he will make it—he will! he will! Such were the cries from the men in the motte, as they narrowly watched the progress of the scout, and then a wild yell of joy burst from the timber as they saw Prairie Rover rush in between the two columns, his rifle flashing right and left upon his enemies, still two hundred yards distant.

Warrior after warrior fell as the leaden hail was poured into the crowded ranks, but on they pressed, pouring in a shower of arrows and rifle-bullets as they came.

As though bearing a charmed life, the scout and his noble steed remained unhurt, dashing across the line, and with a yell from Prairie Rover that was heard at the motte, the flying steed bounded away on the open prairie, followed by a hundred Indian horsemen.

But Comrade was no ordinary steed, and his swift flight soon distanced the smaller mustangs of the warriors, and in an hour had left them far behind, as, unhurt, horse and rider sped on, having successfully escaped in the forlorn hope, and with every chance of soon bringing aid from the fort to rescue Captain Raymond and his gallant band.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PRAIRIE ROBIN HOOD.

Upon the evening of the arrival of the Indian forces in front of the settlement, and when the white renegade chief was planning his attack against his own race, there suddenly darted into the outlaw camp an Indian messenger, his horse showing signs of hard riding, and even his red-skin rider exhibiting in his stern face a look of fatigue.

It was near the sunset hour, and the white chief and his red allies were holding a council of war beneath a huge tree where Robin Hood had halted and made his headquarters.

The steed, a large sorrel stallion, with a build denoting extraordinary speed and bottom, was grazing near by, loose, while his bridle, accoutrements, and a silver-mounted Mexican saddle, with its broad horn, lay at the base of the tree.

Leaning against the trunk of the tree, his arms folded upon his broad breast, and his whole attitude one of perfect ease and grace, was the man who had won the name of the Prairie Robin Hood.

Six feet in height, he was of a magnificent physique, and beneath the closely-fitting pants of dressed buck-skin, and blue flannel shirt, his form gave indication of great strength, agility, and powers of endurance.

Cavalry boots incased his feet, the tops reaching to his knees, and the heels arched with silver spurs, while upon his head he wore a soft, gray-felt hat, looped up upon the left side with a gold arrow, and with a black plume drooping over the brim.

A broad belt encircled his small waist, and upon either hip was a handsomely-mounted revolver, while in front, and ready for the clutch of either hand, were a bowie-knife and a double-barreled pistol of exceedingly large bore and fine sight.

Hanging to the belt, upon the left side, and attached by a red-silk cord, was a small, gleaming battle-ax, with a long handle, and a weapon which the chief had been known to use with terrible effect in battle.

Having described the general appearance of the noted Robin Hood, his face certainly deserves mention, for it was one that once seen could not be forgotten.

The eyes were as changeable in expression as an April day, being at times cruelly bitter, again savage in their fierceness, and then touchingly sorrowful; but at all times they were searching and restless in their look.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 293.)

You lay your accursed and bloody claws upon the head or form of a white woman, and I'll tear with my own hand your scalp from your skull," cried the white chief, his eyes flashing fire.

Instantly the Indian warriors were upon their feet, their hands upon their weapons, and undismayed, Robin Hood stood before them, an evil glitter in his eyes.

"What! has our white brother turned traitor?" asked Big Whistler, after a pause.

"I will never be a traitor to a woman, even though I practice hellish barbarities upon men."

"No, you red devils, I lead you against the settlement to kill and make captive the men, and to carry off what plunder you can; but, so help me the Great Spirit, if one woman, or child, dies by the hand of a red-skin intentionally, I'll turn my renegade bloodhounds upon you, and aid the white warriors in driving you to your haunts."

The Prairie Robin Hood spoke in a tone that proved he was in deadly earnest, and evil looks were going the rounds of the Indians' faces, and a storm was threatening, when suddenly a horseman dashed swiftly into the midst of the party.

"Hal! what brings the Comanche Wild Wolf here now, when he skulked to the prairie when we took the war-path?" tauntingly said the white chief.

"The Wild Wolf is no skulking dog; he has been on the war-path of the pale-face warriors, and has come to tell his red brothers that the braves from the fort are now laying in ashes their happy villages in the hills."

A yell of terror, of rage and despair, went up from the assembled chiefs at this news; but the stern voice of Robin Hood checked their cries.

"Who is it, my red brothers, that brings this news?"

"A stranger chief, a Comanche dog, a friend of the pale-faces."

"The Comanche lies."

With a yell of fury the Wild Wolf threw himself from the back of his steed and rushed upon the white chief, his knife glittering in his hand.

But a dozen strong arms seized and held him back, and powerless, he cried:

"Red brothers, the tongue of the Wild Wolf is not crooked; he speaks straight; the pale-faces are now in their happy homes."

"If my red brothers doubt the Wild Wolf, let them bear him back a prisoner, and then burn him at the stake."

The words and manner of the Comanche carried conviction with them, and again almost inhuman yell filled the air, while in hot haste the Indians began to mount, no longer thinking of attacking the settlements while their own homes and families were in danger.

In vain Robin Hood pleaded with them to continue on and devastate the settlement; his words were unheeded, and in a short while the whole band of warriors departed, leaving the angry and disappointed Robin Hood alone with his squadron of renegades.

But, undaunted by the desertion of his allies, the daring chief determined to himself strike a blow against the settlement, and with what plunder he could secure dart back to his stronghold in the hills, distant nearly three days' journey from the fort.

With this determination, he called his men around him, made known his intended plans, and at nightfall the band was upon the move, slowly approaching the happy homes of the hardy pioneers of the frontier.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 293.)

Idaho Tom,

THE YOUNG OUTLAW OF SILVERLAND!

BY OLL COOMES.

CHAPTER XXV.

IDAHO TOM AND THE MAD TRAPPER ON THE MOVE.

By a dim fire that burned on the hearth of the Mad Trapper's cabin, sat the old border man himself and Idaho Tom.

Without it was night, black and gloomy. The door of the cabin was closed and barred. The little window also had been fastened up, and every available point strengthened and guarded with extreme care, as though danger was apprehended.

"Yes, yes," the trapper was saying, when we intrude upon the privacy of their conversation, "the days of peace are all over with hereaways, Thomas. Old Molock has been stirred up, and he in turn has stirred up the red-skins."

"And one might as well stir up a hornet's nest," added Idaho Tom.

"Yes, the condemned vagrants are mean and devilish; and they're swarmin' over from the foot-hills like muskeeters. Shouldn't wonder if we'd be driven out o' here in less than a week."

"But I can't see, for the life of me, why—" began Tom, but his words were here cut short by a clicking sound starting suddenly up in the big pine chest in the corner to the left of the fire-place.

The old trapper started to his feet, and glancing toward Tom, at the same time assuming an attitude of intense listening, raised his finger as if to enjoin silence upon the lips of his companion.

The clicking in the corner lasted for only a moment or two.

"Well, if I must, I must; for I won't ask you to go out," the trapper said to his companion, as he turned and advanced toward the chest. Reaching it, he inserted a key, turned it, and then lifted the lid, revealing to the astonished gaze of the youth a telegraphic battery.

"I thought so from the first night I staid here, friend Dee," the youth said, pointing to the instrument.

"I lowed you'd hear the thing click; but then it's no use keepin' a secret from a friend," replied the trapper, with an air of philosophical gravity. "That, Tom, is an undefined, gimin'wine, lightnin'-geared telegraph machine; and I'm the child that fingers this end of the communicatin' thingumbob. Zoe Leland larned me to play on it. It's connected with the floatin' island on the bay, over a mile distant. I was called just now, and I'm goin' to answer 'Here!'" and he adjusted the connecting wire.

"I believe you, Tom—every word you have told me, and shall to the last. But, lad, as we are now comin' near the lake, we'd better look a leetle out for red-skins."

"How are we going to get over to the island when we get to the bay, Zed?"

"Trust that part to me, Tom," replied the trapper.

The two moved on now in silence, and soon came to the margin of the woods skirting the bay. Within the shadows they paused and glanced out upon the beach. The moon, peeping through the clouds just then, showed them a number of shadowy forms moving along the shore to the right and left of their position.

"Wait a minute, and I'll find out," Zed asked the question over the wire.

"An Indian, they say," Dee replied, after receiving an answer. "They don't know how he ever got to the island, but long before night he got there somehow or other, and carried her off in one of their own canoes. Strikes me as being a queer thing, Tom."

"Why haven't we known this sooner?"

"Because we haven't been here, nor down to the bay. Leland says he's been tryin' to git me here for four long hours, and we see we've only been here a little while. That explains the hull thing."

"Well, what's to be done?"

"We're wanted at the island, right away. It is being besieged by a hundred red-skins that seem bent on its karter. Leland says we'll have to approach with great caution."

"Is any one in pursuit of Zoe's captors, did he say?"

"I'll ask," said the trapper-operator, fingering the instrument rapidly.

The answer was soon flashed back.

"Frank Caselton and a friend are in pursuit. The rest of the Boy Hunters are here on the island, fighting nobly for us."

"I dare say that curse of this land, Mat Molock, the Wolf-Herder, has got her in his hands. And if so, what can two boys do toward rescuing her? My opinion is that Zoe Leland is lost."

"It may be, Thomas, but let us hope for the best till we are positive. But, Tom, will you go to the island with me now?"

"I hardly know what to do—whether to strike out for Molock's quarters, and lend my aid in rescuing Zoe, or go down to the bay."

"Tom," said Dee, seriously, "I verily believe that you are in love with Zoe Leland."

"Tom blushed, but finally stammered out:

"I am not ashamed of the truth, friend Dee. I do love Zoe Leland with all my heart, and have from the hour I first saw her. My love told me that the boy Albert, who came here that memorable night, was Zoe in disguise, notwithstanding your efforts to deceive me in the matter."

The old trapper smiled, sadly, and replied: "I b'lieve you could see through a millstone, Tom, if you recognized Zoe in her disguise that night. But then, I a'ers b'lieve you loved that girl. She's a cherubin, Tom, if that were ever one on earth. She's good enough, purty enough and sweet enough for an angel to marry, I do solemnly believe."

"That's what I'm afraid of—that she is too good for a young vagabond like me."

"Heavins, listen!" It was the old trapper that uttered the exclamation.

The sullen boom of a cannon rolled up from the lake and burst forth anew in a hundred mountain echoes.

"They're having it hot and heavy down there," said Tom, with a nervous start.

"Let's git ready and go down," replied Dee;

"what say you, Thomas?"

"I am ready for anything, Zed," answered Tom.

The two secured their weapons and plunged out into the night.

The sky was overcast, and a dense fog hung over the valley and hills.

Down the gloomy pass the two turned their faces, and moved with hasty footsteps.

They hurried on in silence for some distance, when Idaho Tom finally said:

"Zedekiah, I must admit that the past month has been the most eventful one of my life."

"Why so, Tom?" asked the borderman.

"Because I have been completely puzzled and mystified all the time."

"Well, what about?"

"Things around Tahoe; the secret connected with the floating island and other things, down to your connection with the whole."

"Don't let that, this, or anything bother your brain now, Tom," replied Dee. "I'll explain everything one of these days. I know things you speak of look queer to a stranger, but then it is the object of those interested in the matter that they should wear an air of mystery so as to keep the red-skins away. But, dang 'em, they don't 'pear to skeer worth a Continental. Rest assured, Tom, that that is nothin' wrong about any of this apparent mystery that puzzles you."

"But, Dee, those two men that we buried the other day were friends of yours, were they not?"

"Wal, ye-as, they war, Tom," the trapper replied, with some hesitation.

"And were they not down to Virginia City, not very long ago?" questioned Tom.

"Yes, a few days ago we were killed by the red heathens. But I should think you knew all about that, Tom," was the response, that started Tom slightly.

"Why should I, Zed?"

"Cause, didn't you play poker with them?"

"Yes, I b'lieve I did."

"And didn't they scoop you outen a dia-mone ring?"

"Yes, they did; and I saw that ring to-day."

"The boys give it to her, for it was her mother's ring, that she prized very dearly."

"Indeed?" exclaimed Tom, in the deepest surprise.

"It was taken from her," Zedekiah continued, "about two or three months ago by the road-agents, while passing through Purgatory valley in the stage-coach. And, Tom, it's being in your possession looked a little suspicious. The matter was placed in the hands of detectives to work out in hopes of gettin' the rest of the jewelry taken at the same time, also, to watch you, and find out your headquarters and the hull caboose. But, Tom, I never b'lieve you war a road-agent, and so that's just why I've told you what I have."

"I thank you very much for telling me, Zed; but does Zoe know that your friends won the ring from me at poker?"

"Yas."

Tom sighed regretfully, and after a moment's silence responded:

"Zed, I tell you I am no road-agent nor robber. That ring was given me by the clerk of the 'Ophir Exchange,' in consideration of a valuable service rendered him. He told me at the time that it had been pawned at the saloon for a keg of whisky, but, as it was not redeemed within the stipulated time, it became the clerk's property."

"I believe you, Tom—every word you have told me, and shall to the last. But, lad, as we are now comin' near the lake, we'd better look a leetle out for red-skins."

"How are we going to get over to the island when we get to the bay, Zed?"

"Trust that part to me, Tom," replied the trapper.

The two moved on now in silence, and soon came to the margin of the woods skirting the bay.

Within the shadows they paused and glanced out upon the beach. The moon, peeping through the clouds just then, showed them a number of shadowy forms moving along the shore to the right and left of their position.

"Dar'n't make a break here," Zedekiah whispered.

Keeping within the shadows, they stole around to the south-west side of the bay, and again paused and listened. All was silent here. The Indians appeared to have concentrated their force all on the north or north side of the bay.

"At least, this was the sunrise of Zed and Tom, at least, this was the sunrise of Zed and Tom, and found upon the extreme silence that prevailed along this part of the shore; to their surprise, however, they were suddenly startled by a low moan.

Tom uttered a low exclamation of surprise, while the Mad Trapper chuckled as if with suppressed laughter.

SWUNG OFF.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

The rosy Nan, that winsome thing,
Lig' t-heard as a feather,
And I sat in that woodland swing
So cheerly together.

The green leaves rustled glad and gay;
Flowers at our feet were springing;
How soft my shadow lay—
And it was blythe swinging!

As to and fro we stily went,
It seemed that if the rope was rent
In air, we'd still go drifting.

She sweetly clung unto my arm;
Oh, happy, happy clinging!
I vowed I'd save her from all harm,
And kissed her, gently swinging.

And as we higher swung at last
It looked somewhat appalling,
I kept one arm about her waist
To hold the maid from falling.

I said, "It seems we're on the flight
Away from worldly weather,
As if toward some star of light
We're journeying together;

"And let me say here on this rope,
Oh, Nan, I love you gladly!
And—here the limb above us broke,
And down we tumbled maily.

Ah, luckless fall! To earth it dashed
Ourselves and all my fancies;
No bones broke, but my heart it smashed
And utterly ruined Nancy's—

Because she said, in great disdain—
Her tones with anger ringing,
"I'll never speak to you again,
And never go a-swinging."

A Ruse de Guerre.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

"You'd better make up your mind to do it, Frank. I give you my word for it, you'll find 'Laurelton' not a bad place, and the girls are—well, there are no finer girls than my granddaughters."

Old Judge Ransom looked earnestly over his gold-rimmed glasses at Frank Hazelton's handsome, indifferent face.

"You certainly are very good, judge, to press upon me such a friendly invitation to visit 'Laurelton,' and under any other circumstances than those we have discussed, I would be delighted to accept. As it is—I confess I haven't the cheek to go down to your place, see my pretty second cousins, be entertained by aunt Sara, and all the while feel that my object, and your object, is to select me a wife from among the young ladies."

"That's the sheerest nonsense, boy. Why on earth shouldn't you marry one of your cousins, and thereby secure 'Laurelton' in the family? Somebody'll get the fine old place with one of my girls—why shouldn't it as well be you?"

"I suppose you call yours a very sensible view of the case, Judge Ransom. But, how can a fellow expect to curb and harness his fancy and affection to suit—even with 'Laurelton' thrown in the bargain?"

"Who's talking of fancies and affection? I only asked you to run down to the homestead for the holidays and get acquainted with the girls; then, if you fall in love with one of them, well and good. There's not much danger but that they'll take to you, Frank. You're a fine fellow, and your five years' absence at the German universities add very greatly to your popularity."

"Thank you, judge. Surely I ought to be grateful, and oblige you by falling in love with one of my charming cousins."

"Then we'll consider it settled, shall we? The Thursday before Christmas."

"I guess we'll manage it between us, Sara. Frank's agreed to come, and what's more, has half-promised to fall in love with one of the girls."

Judge Ransom sat reading his village paper beside the cheery open grate; and fat, motherly Mrs. Ransom sat in her capacious chair, busily darnng socks.

"Promised to fall in love with one of the girls! Henry, the idea! Who ever heard of such a thing! You never went and told him you wanted him to marry one of them?"

"Of course I did. There's nothing like being open and above-board. I like young Hazelton, and told him so; and told him he was welcome to one of my granddaughters, and 'Laurelton' in the bargain."

"Well, Henry Ransom, I never would have believed you were such a—fool! Don't you know you've ruined our little arrangement by going and telling him? Why, there's not a man living who'll take a fancy to a girl that is recommended to him! Well, if you aren't a nimshie!"

"I can't see what I've done so dreadful. I'm sure you are as anxious to have him in the family as I am."

"Of course I am—and that is why I hate to see anything spoiled so. My word for it, Frank Hazelton is of too noble a nature to deliberately make love to a girl because she is rich; and, at the same time, I know he will take a dislike to 'em simply because he knows he is expected to do the other thing."

"Seems to me I have put my foot in it, Sara, according to your way of thinking. I am sure I meant well enough."

"Oh, I know that. Now, if you'll just leave it to me, and agree to do just what I say, I think it'll end all right, yet. Listen, now, and see if a woman can't beat even a judge in love affairs."

And he sat and listened, his fine face gradually broadening until it was one big smile from eyebrows to chin.

"If you don't deserve a diploma," he declared, jubilantly.

A magnificent December night, with myriads of frosty-twinkling stars above, and a snow-bound landscape below them; and Frank Hazelton, wrapped in his Astrachan overcoat, and his seal-skin cap cozily jammed over his forehead, thought, as he was driven from the depot to "Laurelton" behind the judge's fast trotters, and in the "Laurelton's" big double-seated, warmly-cushioned sleigh, that the lines might fall to a fellow in a farless pleasant place than that to which he was going; where the judge met him at the door, in the broad banner of warm yellow light streaming from within.

"Come right in, my boy—right in! You're as welcome as the first flowers in spring. Here's aunt Sara waiting to kiss you—aren't you, eh?"

Frank found himself in warm, motherly arms, and, laughing and joking, was escorted to the parlor, where four young girls were sitting in apparent ready welcome.

"What have I four cousins? Judge, you've got the best of me. I had no idea my courage was to be put to such a test."

"Indeed, you needn't think you are so blessed

as to possess four pretty cousins. These are all you need lay claim to—Maud and Ida, my two dear granddaughters. These other two young ladies are Miss Florence and Irma Cloudesley—visiting 'Laurelton,' to assist in entertaining you."

After such an informal introduction, the ice was immediately broken; and, before the merry little circle broke up that night, Frank caught himself internally offering congratulations to himself that he had come to "Laurelton."

"Pretty girls—of course they're pretty, all of them," he soliloquized, mentally, as he carefully arranged his necktie, one bright, merry morning, a month after he had come to the world.

"There's Maud, with her matchless grace and her stately, dignified manner. She should wear a coronet and never feel but what the strawberry leaves were honored by her acceptance. But not for a thousand 'Laureltons' would I spend a lifetime with her; when an hour exhausts all her entertaining and instructive ability."

"I wonder what aunt Sara and the judge would think if they knew of my private opinion of Maud and Ida! To be sure Ida's a nice, ladylike little thing, and has about as much mind of her own as a butterfly. I doubt if she ever really does think beyond the arrangement of her pretty yellow hair, and the fit of those marvelously tiny slippers of hers."

From which it will be seen Mr. Frank Hazelton had been very observant.

"There's the Misses Cloudesley—sensible, intelligent girls as I ever saw; only Florence, will persist in tyrannizing over dear little Irma—"

Then the dinner-bell abruptly dispelled his mental criticisms, and he went down, to find them all gone in but Irma Cloudesley, who, with a suspiciously tearful face, stood before the mirror. She started, half-guilty, as he entered.

"Oh, I thought you had gone in. You're late, Mr. Hazelton."

"And so are you. What has kept you?"

He saw the flush surge over her cheeks.

"I—oh—nothing—much."

"Has Flo been teasing you again?"

He went close up to her, looking down into her face.

"No—nothing at all. Please go in to dinner, Mr. Hazelton."

She looked really distressed, he saw; but the headstrong fellow did not obey at all.

"'Tis go, in a moment, Irma. Tell me first if you are angry with me that you seem so eager to get rid of me! Not only now, Irma, but always. You avoid me continually."

She blushed rosier than ever and turned her face away.

"No, Irma! you must answer me. Have I offended you?"

"No, Mr. Hazelton, you have not. Please go to dinner. They won't like it, and Maud will think—"

She hesitated, and looked painfully confused.

"Irma, I positively will not go to dinner until I know what is the matter with you, if I never eat a mouthful again. What will Maud think? What right has my cousin to think anything about what I do?"

"Oh, Mr. Hazelton—you—you are cruel to ask me. It was foolish in me to say a word."

"Every word you say is very sweet to me, little girl. Tell me why you dread Maud's knowing we are here, together? Tell me, Irma, or I shall—kiss you!"

"You know well enough," she faltered, desperately. "You know they all expect you will marry Maud, and—"

Frank laughed, and suddenly caught her in both his arms and kissed her.

"Don't struggle, Irma—you are my little darling, arn't you? You love me, don't you? Because I love you so very dearly, Irma! dear little Irma! Maud knows I never shall marry her, and I know I shall marry you, sha'n't I?"

"Oh, Frank!" She whispered it shyly, blissfully, as she looked into his handsome face. "You ought not to love me and lose 'Laurelton'! Indeed, indeed, I'm not worth so much."

"I consider myself the best judge of that, Miss Cloudesley! Perhaps you think, in your humility, that you are not more to me than ten thousand 'Laurelton's."

"Am I—really—an I, Frank?"

He kissed her over and over again.

"Shall we go to dinner—or, has your appetite vanished? Mine has, after such nectar as your kisses."

She laughed, then he saw her beautiful mouth begin to quiver.

"Frank—you won't be angry, will you? promise me! it wasn't my fault, truly, but grandma's."

She looked so wistfully at him, and her language was so puzzling, that he laughed outright.

"Angry!—never! Promise you—any thing?"

She leaned her head forward, so he could not see her face.

"I am not Irma Cloudesley, but Irma Ransom. Sister Florence and I exchanged identities with Maud and Ida, who are really the Misses Cloudesley. So, after all, Frank, you shall have 'Laurelton'—if you will take it. Will you—with me?"

That of course settled it, since Frank was so anxious to have Irma. And, so, after all, Aunt Sara's *ruse de guerre* accomplished the desired end, on the unalterable principle that she and the rest of us women understand, that men are stubborn creatures, who are sure to do just exactly contrary to the way you want them to do.

"Seems to me I have put my foot in it, Sara, according to your way of thinking. I am sure I meant well enough."

"Oh, I know that. Now, if you'll just leave it to me, and agree to do just what I say, I think it'll end all right, yet. Listen, now, and see if a woman can't beat even a judge in love affairs."

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She hesitated, and looked painfully confused.

"Irma, I positively will not go to dinner until I know what is the matter with the old home which was hers no longer. It seemed almost like giving up a friend to let it go, but there was no help for it. When she looked about this little room, in the hot, noisy tenement-house, her thoughts would go back to the old home, and she could smell the flowers in the little garden, and hear her mother's voice, and it filled her with unutterable longing; such dreary, homesick longing for what she could never have again.

And then—was that the thought of Max? Where was he? Was he living or dead? Two years had gone away since she had left him good-bye and left his German home behind him to seek his fortune in the wide New World. Two years! and not a word from him in all that time. He might be dead!

He had promised to send for her when the new home he had talked of so hopefully was ready for her. When the old home was lost to her, she had nowhere to go, and she had followed her lover to the New World, hoping to find him there. But the New World was so wide that she could find no trace of him in it. He must be dead.

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(BUFFALO-BILL)